

Students in Crisis Topic: **Campus Violence**

Compiled By: Robert Forbus: Ph.D. Student, Marketing Communication  
Samantha Gomes: Ph.D. Student, Mass Communication  
Department of Communication Sciences  
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT  
[robert.forbus@uconn.edu](mailto:robert.forbus@uconn.edu)  
[samantha.gomes@uconn.edu](mailto:samantha.gomes@uconn.edu)

Introduction: On April 20, 1999, I was running on a treadmill at the YMCA while watching the news. The Columbine shootings were the story of the day. I thought, “That would never happen here.” But on April 16, 2007, I was in the Student Union’s food court when CNN reported the Virginia Tech shootings. Most of us stared glassy-eyed at the flat-screen monitors. This time I thought, “That could happen here. That could be us on the news.”

Facts: Disturbing as the mass murders above are, and they are the horrifying stuff of nightmares, violence on campus isn’t limited to these events. In fact, campus violence is much more prevalent than many suspect.

- According to the Violent Victimization of College Students report
- (Baum & Klaus, 2005), between 1995 and 2002, college students ages 18-24 were victims of approximately 479,000 crimes of violence annually: rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault.
- Approximately 15-20% of female college students have experienced forced intercourse (rape) (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987).
- Approximately 5-15% of college men have acknowledged forced intercourse (Koss et al., 1987; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991).
- Approximately one out of every 14 U.S. men reports being physically assaulted or raped by an intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).
- Simple assault accounted for about two-thirds of college student violent crimes (63%), while rape/sexual assault accounted for around 6%.
- Approximately 5% of completed and attempted rapes committed against students were reported to police (Fisher et al., 2000).
- Rape/sexual assault was the only violent crime against students more likely to be committed by a person the victim knew. Non-strangers committed 79% of the rape/sexual assaults against students.
- Alcohol and other drugs were implicated in approximately 55-74% of sexual assaults on campuses (Lisak & Roth, 1990; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987).
- Twenty percent of faculty, staff, and students surveyed feared for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Rankin, 2003).
- Nearly 19% of students who drank alcohol reported being physically injured (ACHA, 2004).

- An estimated 1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related injuries (Hingson, Heeren, Zakocs, Kopstein, & Wechsler, 2002).

Tips for  
the Classroom:

- *Dating violence*: 1 in 5 college students have reported at least one instance of domestic violence in a relationship context. While this violence is thought to happen only to women, anyone in a relationship can be the victim of dating violence. This issue affects men and women, straight or gay/lesbian. While you may never witness this violence in the classroom it is important to recognize the warning signs and what you can do to help so that you are best prepared to deal with any situation you may encounter.
  - Warning signs of dating violence: Physical violence (hitting, grabbing, slapping), breaking furniture or other violence, physical intimidation (threatening), emotional control (name calling, mocking, criticism, put downs), verbal control (interrupting, topic changing, not listening), excessive possessiveness and jealousy, sexual coercion, excessive, accusations of promiscuity, threats of suicide, and/or threats of violence against others.
  - What you can do:
    - Support their decision to seek help but respect their limits
    - Ask questions, verbalizing their experiences may help them recognize abuse
    - Help him/her identify their abusers excuses for abuse and address the validity of these excuses
    - Provide information on abuse or refer to your institutions counseling center for further resources
    - Reinforce the fact that you are available to talk to and nonjudgmental
  - What you should avoid:
    - Assuming that you know what is best for them and/or coercing them to follow YOUR plan of action. This can reinforce the student's feelings of victimization.
    - Directly or indirectly implying that the student is responsible for the situation or the actions of their abusers
    - Talking to the student and the abuser at the same time, try to speak with the student in private

Web Sites: [http://www.acha.org/info\\_resources/Campus\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.acha.org/info_resources/Campus_Violence.pdf)  
Visit to read a white paper from the American College Health Association on the topic of college violence.

Citations:

- (ACHA) American College Health Association. (2004). *National college health assessment: Reference group executive summary spring 2004*. Baltimore, MD: American College Health Association.

- Baum, K., & Klaus, P. (2005, January). *Violent victimization of college students, 1995-2002*. (NCJ Publication No. 206836). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2000). *The Sexual Victimization of College Women* (NCJRS Publication No. 182369). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Criminal Justice Reference Service.
- Hingson, R.W., Hereen, T., Zakocs, R.C., Kopstein, A., & Wechsler, H. (2002, March). Magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18-24. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 63(2), 136-144.
- Koss, M. P., Gidycz, C. A., & Wisniewski, N. (1987). The scope of rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55, 64-170.
- Lisak, D., & Roth, S. (1990). Motives and psychodynamics of self-reported, unincarcerated rapists. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 60, 268-280.
- Malamuth, N. M., Sockloskie, R. J., Koss, M. P., & Tanaka, J. S. (1991). Characteristics of aggressors against women: Testing a model using a national sample of college students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 59, 670-681.
- Muelenhard, C., & Linton, M. (1987). Date rape and sexual aggression in dating situations: Incidence and risk factors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 34, 186-196.
- Rankin, S.R. (2003). *Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People: A National Perspective*. New York: The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.
- Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000, July). *Extent, nature, and consequences of intimate partner violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey* (NCJRS Publication No. 181867). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Criminal Justice Reference Service.
- University of Connecticut: Women’s Center Guide to Dating Violence  
[http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/issues/dating\\_violence.php](http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/issues/dating_violence.php)